

WASHINGTON, DC — On Thursday, February 12, 2009, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) introduced legislation to create The Silver Scholarship program. This program would provide individuals over the age of 55 who commit to volunteering for 500+ hours per year a \$1,000 education award to be used for continuing education.

“Today, there are 77 million baby boomers that are better educated, healthier than previous generations and want or need to keep physically and mentally active in their golden years,” said Congressman Sestak. “This legislation capitalizes on this wealth of human resource by closing the gap between the shortage of mentors – there are only 500,000 in this country – and the millions of children in need of direction.”

### Provisions of the Silver Scholarship Act

- Provides \$1,000 scholarships to anyone 55 years of age or older, who performs 500 hours of volunteer services in a 12 month period.

### The Need for Senior Scholars:

- Four out of 10 third graders do not read at a level that is necessary for them to be successful.
- Most estimate the number of mentors in the country at less than 500,000, while there are several million youth who would accept and benefit from adult mentoring.
- Well-run mentoring programs can change youth's life trajectories, reduce drug and alcohol use, and improve academic behaviors.
- A recent analysis of more than two dozen studies concluded that one-on-one tutoring programs that tap community volunteers and college students to help improve children's reading skills can be highly effective.
- The Corporation for National Service funded demonstrations projects which revealed that seniors in retirement will commit to serving ten hours per week if: projects are well-run and getting important things done in communities; if there is a structure through which the individual can participate; if there is some modest incentive to cover out-of-pocket costs and to recognize that the activity has value; and if there is flexibility built into the task so that seniors can participate in a variety of activities and in different amounts and blocks of times. The Silver Scholarship Proposal will build on these experiences and successes.

### The Purpose of the Silver Scholarship Program

- Mobilizes the time, talent, experience and resources of people aged 55 and over to tutor and mentor young children and youth in after-school programs for at least 500 hours a year.

### Administration of the Program

- The program will be administered by the Corporation for National Service, which will give grants to small and faith-based non-profit organizations that then will award the Scholarships.
- All organizations currently receiving funds under the National and Community Service Act or the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, including under the National Senior Service Corps, will be eligible to compete for these funds
- The scholarships must be used for qualified tuition and related expenses as defined under Section 117 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. As such, the scholarships will not be considered income for federal tax purposes.

This legislation is a part of Congressman Sestak's ongoing commitment to our nation's senior citizens. On Wednesday, February 11, 2009, the House of Representatives passed Congressman Sestak's Elder Abuse Victims Act (HR 448).

Congressman Sestak originally introduced the Elder Abuse Victims Act in the 110th session. It is now the first bill to pass the House of Representatives in 17 years on elder abuse. The legislation focuses on protecting seniors from abuse by evaluating state and federal programs, advocacy grants, and prosecution of elder abuse cases. Notably, it funds elder abuse prosecutorial departments at the local, state and federal levels; trains law enforcement officials on appropriate action in these cases; funds nurse-investigators who are experts in identifying elder abuse; and requires the Attorney General to conduct a study evaluating state programs and practices designed to protect seniors from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

"Everyday, too many of our nation's seniors become victim to physical, emotional, financial, or other abuse," said Congressman Sestak. "This legislation recognizes the limitations on our country's approach to elder abuse prosecution and rehabilitation and puts in place a system to assess and effectively respond to these deficiencies."

Since being elected to office, Congressman Sestak has worked hard to establish oversight for elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. He was a leading advocate and co-sponsor of the Elder Justice Act, which proposed the allocation of funds for state and local adult protective services to investigate reports of elder abuse and work with congressional committees to establish a national nurse aide registry. In addition, the Elder Justice Act (not to be confused with the Elder Abuse Victims Act) proposed grant creation for the establishment of stationary and mobile forensic centers, development of forensic expertise, and the provision of services for victims of elder neglect and exploitation. Additionally, the Elder Justice Act would provide incentives for

individuals to receive training in providing better direct care in a long-term care facility.

Congressman Sestak visits senior groups and centers across the District nearly every weekend and has spoken to numerous senior groups on a variety of issues, including elder neglect and abuse at nursing homes. Recently, Congressman Sestak spoke at the Glen Riddle Senior Home and Rosemont Presbyterian Village to raise awareness of elder abuse and the need for strengthened protections and greater training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors dealing with cases of this nature.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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